

How to win collaborators and influence people

Keen to influence new NHS powers? Business coach Hannah McNamara shares her five top tips for building professional relationships with **Emma Weinbren**

As NHS reforms shake up the healthcare system, pharmacists are getting ready to build new local relationships and make their voices heard. But, as many of us know, networking situations can often lead to Bridget Jones-style embarrassment – in fact, even your choice of shirt may prove a deal-breaker.

Professional relationships are often complex and difficult to get right, explains business coach Hannah McNamara. And securing your influence on the local health and wellbeing board and commissioning consortium could come down to whether members feel you're "on their level".

"A lot of business techniques come down to mirroring and matching what other people are doing," Ms McNamara says. In fact, simple changes to your behaviour could make the difference between alienating colleagues and winning them over. Speaking exclusively to C+D, Ms McNamara shares her tips for navigating the most difficult situations.

1 Make first impressions count

When making a first impression, people tend to concentrate on what they say. However, business experts agree that non-verbal factors are just as vital, if not more so. "A good firm handshake is important," says Ms McNamara. "Try to match handshakes, so if someone gives you a fairly weak handshake, don't crush them. Equally, don't give a weak handshake to

someone who has a stronger grip." She also advises to carefully consider your dress code. "You need to look the part," she explains. "Dressing smartly is best in formal situations, but try to match what other people are wearing."



HRM Coaching's
Hannah McNamara

2 Use open body language

People are often unaware they are using negative body language, says Ms McNamara. "Many people cross their arms when they're cold, but that looks confrontational," she warns. "It puts a barrier between you and the other person." Instead, she advises people to use open body language and hand gestures to communicate their point. If in doubt, do what the other person is doing. "The more you can mimic someone else's body language, the more they feel that you get them," she explains.

3 Create common ground

Establishing common ground between yourself and a colleague can come down to a subtle choice of words. Ms McNamara says most people use one of three senses when they communicate: visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. "Visual people tend to use words about how things look and they like to see things, so come armed with graphs," she advises. "People who are auditory, however, will pay a lot of attention to the words that you're using and will repeat things back in their own minds." Meanwhile, kinaesthetic people tend to focus on feelings, emotions and experiences. Building a connection with people can come down to using the same words, so while you would tell auditory people something "sounds good", tell a visual person it "looks good".

4 Negotiate effectively

"When it comes to negotiating, sometimes you have to put yourself in the other person's shoes and see things from their point of view," says Ms McNamara. "Think about what's in it for them and show them how your idea can help them achieve their targets." But concessions are inevitable, she warns. "Be willing to make some concessions, so always ask for more than you expect to get and don't make big concessions too easily. Make them look painful and always do it in exchange for something else," she explains. And don't be put off by negotiating techniques such as 'the flinch'. "If someone flinches, they're inflating the concessions they're making," she says, "so if they flinch, flinch back."

5 Be prepared

It may sound like a cub scout mantra, but being prepared really is key to getting your point across. While people may disagree with your opinion, it's much harder to object to well-researched facts. "Know your facts and figures – always do some research," Ms McNamara advises.

Your top negotiating tips

"Negotiating is about being prepared and knowing both sides of the argument. You're not going to win everything, so you should establish what you can concede to get some common ground. You can't go in there stamping your feet – it's very much looking at the situation, understanding what other people's difficulties are and how we can help."

Geoff Ray, Total Health Pharmacy, Norfolk

"The most basic tip is to have a clear idea of what you want the outcome to be. I think a lot of people go into negotiations without knowing what their bottom line is, so sitting down and having an appraisal of what you want is a good starting point."

Melinda Setanoians, Lloydsparmacy, Lanarkshire

"Perhaps find examples of where someone has taken your position and it has worked well." This information can break down strong opinions and give people the opportunity to change their minds. "People don't like to back down even if they know they're wrong," she says. "But people are quite willing to change their minds if you present them with new information they didn't know before."

Hannah McNamara is the managing director of HRM Coaching in Southwark, London

CPD Reflect • Plan • Act • Evaluate

Tips for your CPD entry on negotiating

REFLECT	How confident am I in my negotiation skills?
PLAN	Consider how better negotiation skills could help my pharmacy, patients and career.
ACT	Use the tips in this guide to improve my negotiation and professional relationship-building skills.
EVALUATE	Am I more confident approaching, talking to and negotiating with other professionals?